

Missouri Food Security Task Force

Final Report

Presented to Missouri Governor Mike Parson and the General Assembly

12-31-2023

Missouri Food Security Task Force Members

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Bethany Moore, University of Missouri, assisted with writing this report.

Attendance and Vote, Final Report – December 22, 2023

Task Force Member	Attendance	Vote
Bill McKelvey, University of Missouri	Present	Yes
Dr. Kristen Alley, North Central Missouri College	Present	Yes
Carmen Berry, Missouri Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics	Absent	
Chris Baker, Feeding Missouri	Present	Yes
Christine Woody, Empower Missouri	Present	Yes
Kimberly Sprenger, Center for Health Policy	Present	Yes
Meredith Knopp, St. Louis Area Foodbank	Present	Yes
Dan Shaul, Missouri Grocers Association	Absent	
Stephen Westbrooks, IFF	Absent	
Kara Hughes, BJC HealthCare	Present	Yes
Bill Coe, Green Acres Urban Farm and Research Project	Present	Yes
Lorin Fahrmeier, Rural Specialty Crop Producer	Absent	
Ashley McCarty, Missouri Farmers Care	Present	Abstain
Blake Rollins, Missouri Farm Bureau	Present	Abstain
Pastor Rickey Anderson, Prince of Peace Church	Absent	
Maile Auterson, Springfield Community Gardens	Present	Yes
Representative Kurtis Gregory, House Republican	Absent	
Representative Ian Mackey, House Democrat	Absent	
Senator Jason Bean, Senate Republican	Absent	
Senator Barbara Washington, Senate Democrat	Absent	
Representative for MO Department of Agriculture	Present	Yes
Representative for MO Department of Economic Development	Present	Abstain
Representative for MO Department of Health and Senior Services	Present	Yes
Representative for MO Department of Social Services	Present	Yes
Representative for MO Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Ed.	Present	Yes

Contents

Missouri Food Security Task Force Members	i
Roll Call and Vote – December 22, 2023.....	ii
Executive Summary.....	2
The Importance of Addressing Food Insecurity in Missouri	7
Recommendations	8
1. Collaboration.....	8
2. Technology.....	8
3. Data Matching & Data Systems	9
4. Local & Regional Food.....	10
5. School Meals	12
6. Food Access.....	12
7. Participation in Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs	13
8. Farm Bill	14
Conclusion.....	15
Citations	16

Executive Summary

In July 2021, House Bill 432 was signed into law by Governor Parson, which created the Missouri Food Security Task Force. The task force is intended to focus on and evaluate potential impacts and strategies to improve food insecurity within the State of Missouri. As specified in [Section 261.450 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri \(RSMo\)](#), the mission of the task force shall be to:

1. Determine the ability of individuals located in urban and rural areas throughout the state to access healthy food and identify populations and areas in which access to food is limited or uncertain.
2. Identify ways in which the state could connect resources and individuals in an effort to ensure food security for all Missourians.
3. Evaluate the impact of tax increment financing projects and restrictive deed covenants imposed by grocery retailers on creating food deserts or prolonging existing food deserts.
4. Evaluate the potential impacts of online food retail on food insecurity throughout the state.
5. Evaluate potential strategies to improve collaborations and efficiencies in federal and state nutrition safety net programming.

The Missouri Food Security Task Force is comprised of twenty-five members with bipartisan representation from both chambers of the General Assembly, several state agencies, and various organizations with expertise in addressing food insecurity.

Task force members engaged in meetings and discussions over the course of two years. Importantly, early meetings focused on understanding the context of food insecurity in Missouri. Resources such as the [Missouri Hunger Atlas](#) and [Feeding America Map the Meal Gap](#) were utilized and showed that food insecurity impacts people in urban, rural, and suburban areas across the state. Data related to food affordability, food spending, and price inflation were considered. Attention was given to understanding the impact of food insecurity on populations including children, those with disabilities, single-parent households, and racial and ethnic minorities. Time was also spent understanding the extent of low-income/low-access areas (i.e., food deserts) across the state and the implications for people who struggle to access nutritious food.

The recommendations outlined in this document are in response to the requirements outlined in the statute. These recommendations do not include the implementation process, including, but not limited to:

- Determining the lead agency on developing an implementation plan, or the agency in charge of specific pieces or portions of implementation.
- The action steps in the implementation plan.
- The potential for requesting law changes at the federal or state level, and the stakeholder(s) responsible for requesting these changes.

- The ability of a state agency or other stakeholder to commit the staffing required for the commitments of the project, and if there are not adequate Full Time Employees (FTE) allocations available, the agency that will be responsible for requesting additional FTEs during the legislative process.
- The ability or process to attempt to procure funding to carry out the plan, including who is responsible for requesting a New Decision Item during the legislative process.
- The availability of the state Information Technology Services Division staff to implement the requirement, and the priority of these recommendations in comparison to other priority projects.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the task force are grouped into **focus areas** and include the following.

1. Collaboration

- a) Support the establishment of a permanent statewide food security task force, coalition, or advisory committee.
- b) Host a food security stakeholders conference, pending funding availability.

2. Technology

- a) Promote Missouri's online Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application system where individuals can apply, upload documents, and manage their SNAP benefits using a computer or smart phone.
- b) Explore opportunities within the benefit application process and support Application Programming Interface (API) connections to other benefit applications to enable people to be screened and connected with all available assistance programs, including SNAP, TANF, housing, childcare assistance, utility assistance, Medicare, Medicaid, WIC, food pantries, and others.

3. Data Matching & Data Systems

- a) Explore potential opportunities to extend current state data matching and sharing efforts to include topics and programs related to food security, basic needs, and other social services across multiple departments.
- b) Explore state agency data system capability gaps and collaborate to develop a plan to address gaps and improve compatibility across state agencies specific to data elements pertinent to food security.

4. Local & Regional Food

- a) Partner with Missouri's regional food banks, Feeding Missouri, farmers and ranchers, and interested stakeholders to increase access to fruits, vegetables, nuts, dairy, and proteins for food insecure Missourians.
- b) Explore opportunities to create state matching or other incentive programs to encourage purchases of locally grown food by state institutions.
- c) Support Farm-to-Institution grants and programs in Missouri and work towards full participation in new opportunities.
- d) Work with current and new program partners to explore matching fund sources for the Double-Up Food Bucks program, an existing SNAP incentive program that promotes the purchase of local, fresh fruits and vegetables at Missouri farmers markets, farm stands, and grocery stores. The program is funded primarily through a federal grant that requires non-federal matching funds.
- e) Facilitate partnerships between the Missouri Department of Agriculture, University of Missouri Extension, Lincoln University Extension, and other interested technical assistance providers to continue building the capacity of Missouri farmers to meet the demand for locally and regionally grown food.
- f) Consider ways to support programs such as the Resilient Food System Infrastructure Program, Heartland Regional Food Business Center Program, Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, Local Food for Schools Purchasing Assistance Program, and others.
- g) Continue to support programs and efforts which build Missouri's capacity for processing of food and commodities. Recent successful efforts include the Missouri Food, Beverage and Forest Products Manufacturing Task Force including Missouri Department of Agriculture Missouri Agriculture and Small Business Development Authority Show-Me Entrepreneurial Grants for Agriculture and the Missouri Agriculture, Food and Forestry Innovation Center.
- h) Continue support for Missouri Department of Agriculture programs which assist food producers across scope, scale, geography, and product.
- i) Understand the impact and potential of innovative urban agriculture initiatives that utilize a variety of production systems, partners, and goals. Explore sustainable funding options to support successful programs.

5. School Meals

- a) Investigate options that will provide support to districts that are eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, to provide free meals to all students, but choose not to do so due to limited financial resources.

- b) Explore opportunities to enable students who qualify for reduced price meals (130-185% of the Federal Poverty Level) to receive free meals.
- c) Explore options for statewide school meals debt reduction including consideration of a statewide Healthy Meals for All Program.

6. Food Access

- a) Increase access to food in urban and rural food deserts by exploring innovative financing opportunities through public and private sources to fund for-profit grocery stores, non-profit organizations, co-ops, and alternative grocery models. Leverage funding with federal dollars such as those available through the USDA Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- b) Explore partnership and training opportunities to assist with the start-up and retention of small, locally owned grocery stores and alternative grocery models. Utilize training provided by the [Rural Grocery Initiative](#).
- c) Increase availability of and access to retailers or sponsors of all federal nutrition assistance programs, such as WIC-authorized retailers and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors, in rural and underserved areas.
- d) Explore options to allow older adults, adults with disabilities, and the unhoused to more effectively access and use SNAP benefits. These options include the Elderly Simplified Application Pilot (ESAP) and legislation that would allow target populations to use SNAP benefits for prepared foods.

7. Participation in Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs

- a) Review federal nutrition assistance program marketing and communications to ensure that materials are written using plain language are accessible for audiences who may not be tech-savvy, and are available in multiple languages.
- b) Consider ways to reduce the gap between those who are eligible and those who participate in all federal nutrition assistance programs including SNAP, WIC, and others.
- c) Continue and enhance outreach efforts and partnerships including SNAP Outreach and others. Target outreach to various audiences through senior centers, daycare centers, and other sites.
- d) Consider the findings from the Missouri Benefits Enrollment Transformation Report ([Civilla Report](#)), [WIC Innovation Project](#), and related research to address gaps in federal assistance program participation.

8. Farm Bill

- a) Encourage the United States Congress to pass a comprehensive Farm Bill, meeting the needs of U.S. producers of food and the nation's most vulnerable citizens who rely on the safety net provided in the Nutrition Title.

The Importance of Addressing Food Insecurity in Missouri

Food insecurity is an issue that impacts rural, urban, and suburban Missourians. The latest research from [Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap](#) shows that an estimated 715,000 Missourians (including 177,000 children), or 11.6% of the total population, are food insecure. These are people and families who don't have enough to eat, lack access to nutritious food, or worry about having enough food in the house to make ends meet.

Food insecurity can have [serious consequences](#) on people's health and overall quality of life. For example:

- People who are food insecure are more likely to experience malnutrition and conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.
- Without adequate food, school and work performance suffer. People may have difficulty concentrating, have low energy, or miss school and work due to illness.
- Food insecurity can negatively impact people's mental health and cause depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Overall feelings of well-being suffer when basic needs such as food and shelter are not met. People may feel isolated, shamed, or stigmatized.

There are also financial costs associated with food insecurity. Factors include low job performance, absenteeism, low educational attainment, and poor health. A U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [report](#) estimates that just over \$1 billion is spent annually on food insecurity-related health care in Missouri.

Those who are food insecure, whether they are adults or children, deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to their family, community, and Missouri's economy. The findings and recommendations in the following section highlight ways the state can move in a positive direction and ensure that food is no longer a limiting factor for Missourians.

Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect the complexity of addressing food insecurity issues in Missouri. They range from local, on-the-ground solutions to support of the federal Farm Bill.

1. Collaboration

- a) Support the establishment of a permanent statewide food security task force, coalition, or advisory committee.
- b) Host a food security stakeholders conference, pending funding availability.

Background

Better collaboration among public and private stakeholders, including philanthropy, can help address the complexity of hunger issues in Missouri. Ongoing efforts to learn from include the [Texas Hunger Initiative](#) at Baylor University, the [Kansas Food Action Network](#), and the [Illinois Commission to End Hunger](#). Importantly, efforts in Missouri could be enhanced by the involvement of philanthropic organizations such as the Missouri Foundation for Health and their [Food Justice Initiative](#).

2. Technology

- a) Promote Missouri's online Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application system where individuals can apply, upload documents, and manage their Supplemental SNAP benefits using a computer or smart phone.
- b) Explore opportunities within the benefit application process and support Application Programming Interface (API) connections to other benefit applications to enable people to be screened and connected with all available assistance programs, including SNAP, TANF, housing, childcare assistance, utility assistance, Medicare, Medicaid, WIC, food pantries, and others.

Background

Technology is a key part of connecting people to resources to improve food security. [Time and process-related confusion](#) can be significant barriers to accessing state and federal benefits (Wu & Eamon, 2010). It is important to consider ways in which technology, such as a mobile application, can be used to enhance the delivery of benefits to reach all who are eligible, reduce stigma, and connect people to additional support services. For agencies, a mobile application has the potential to be cost-effective and reduce the burden on call centers and administrative staff. The task force is encouraged that Missouri is participating in a [pilot program](#) to test mobile, contactless payments in the SNAP program.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is ready to launch a new consolidated data system for childcare. With the launch of this new system, the childcare subsidy application/services will be separate from Department of Social Services benefit programs. Automated referrals to other programs

are not yet available in this new system. However, a webpage and call center is available for other programs for low-income families or families with young children. As the new system releases, there will be more customer support.

In addition, technology can be utilized to enhance data matching and sharing among state agencies. This related topic is detailed in the **Data Matching & Data Systems** section of this report.

3. Data Matching & Data Systems

- a) Explore potential opportunities to extend current state data matching and sharing efforts to include topics and programs related to food security, basic needs, and other social services across multiple departments.
- b) Explore state agency data system capability gaps and collaborate to develop a plan to address gaps and improve compatibility across state agencies specific to data elements pertinent to food security.

Background

Enhancing collaboration internally among state agencies can lead to better food security outcomes. There are opportunities for state agencies to share or match data to enhance program utilization and enable cross-certification. This process is facilitated by inter-agency meetings, memoranda of understanding, and includes a clear understanding of what is allowable under current law. Additionally, this process can be made easier with investment in new updated data systems that can share data among different state departments and among different programs.

The committee is encouraged to know that [some data matching and sharing](#) is already taking place among Missouri state agencies. For example, there are periodic meetings and state-level data sharing agreements in place between WIC, Medicaid, and SNAP programs to enable greater participation in the WIC program (Neuberger and Hall, 2022).

There is an opportunity to go further. The distribution of 2022 Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), requiring data matching and sharing between DESE and DSS, is a prime example where enhanced data sharing could benefit Missourians. In addition, national and state data show that people are missing out on benefits they are eligible to receive. For example, at the national level, it is estimated that [\\$80 billion](#) in assistance is unclaimed each year. Research shows that 26 percent of eligible, low income working people are not enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Similarly, 43 percent of eligible parents and children under five years of age are not enrolled in the Special Supplemental Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Weiss, 2023). The numbers are similar for Missouri. The [Missouri Hunger Atlas](#) (Bass et al., 2019) shows that 27 percent of income eligible people do not participate in SNAP and 40 percent of income eligible children do not participate in WIC.

Various resources exist to help states enhance data sharing and matching, including those available at [Casey Family Programs](#).

4. Local & Regional Food

- a) Partner with Missouri's regional food banks, Feeding Missouri, farmers and ranchers, and interested stakeholders to increase access to fruits, vegetables, nuts, dairy, and proteins for food insecure Missourians.
- b) Explore opportunities to create state matching or other incentive programs to encourage purchases of locally grown food by state institutions.
- c) Support Farm-to-Institution grants and programs in Missouri and work towards full participation in new opportunities.
- d) Work with current and new program partners to explore matching fund sources for the Double-Up Food Bucks program, an existing SNAP incentive program that promotes the purchase of local, fresh fruits and vegetables at Missouri farmers markets, farm stands, and grocery stores. The program is funded primarily through a federal grant that requires non-federal matching funds.
- e) Facilitate partnerships between the Missouri Department of Agriculture, University of Missouri Extension, Lincoln University Extension, and other interested technical assistance providers to continue building the capacity of Missouri farmers to meet the demand for locally and regionally grown food.
- f) Consider ways to support programs such as the Resilient Food System Infrastructure Program, Heartland Regional Food Business Center Program, Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, Local Food for Schools Purchasing Assistance Program, and others.
- g) Continue support for programs and efforts which build Missouri's capacity for processing of food and commodities. Recent successful programs include the Missouri Food, Beverage and Forest Products Manufacturing Task Force including the Missouri Agriculture and Small Business Development Authority Show-Me Entrepreneurial Grants for Agriculture and the Missouri Agriculture, Food and Forestry Innovation Center.
- h) Continue support for Missouri Department of Agriculture programs which assist food producers across scope, scale, geography, and product.
- i) Understand the impact and potential of innovative urban agriculture initiatives that utilize a variety of production systems, partners, and goals. Explore sustainable funding options to support successful programs.

Background

[Robust regional markets](#) are important for supporting farmers across Missouri. Farm-to-Institution purchasing has been found to strengthen local economies by creating markets and increasing job prospects; simultaneously, locally grown foods tend to be healthier and can promote better nutrition and well-being (Benson & Fleury, 2017). States across the country have taken different approaches to incentivizing local food purchases including setting requirements for state institutions to purchase a certain percentage of their foods from local producers, encouraging more local food purchases through an awareness campaign, or giving special procurement privileges to institutions that purchase local foods. To support this work, states and partner organizations have also taken measures to enhance the capacity of local growers to meet the demand for locally grown food by investing in training, education, and value-chain coordination activities. Additional support provided by the state could enhance current USDA-funded initiatives such as the Resilient Food System Infrastructure Program, Heartland Regional Food Business Center Program, Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, and others.

The [Illinois Local Food, Farm, and Jobs Act \(2009\)](#) laid a framework for how states can incentivize more local food procurement among institutions. This act set a goal for all state institutions to purchase at least 20% of their food from local producers by 2020. [Massachusetts](#) passed a law requiring state agencies, colleges, and universities to use “reasonable efforts” to purchase local foods; institutions must purchase the locally sourced product if its price is within 10% of an out-of-state product price (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019). These types of laws can either be written as mandates or recommendations.

An alternative approach is taken by the State of Michigan to help fund local food purchases among K-12 public schools. The [10 Cents a Meal for Michigan’s Kids & Farms](#) program matches what schools spend on Michigan-grown produce up to ten cents per meal through grants. Grant recipients overwhelmingly noted that they were able to offer more local produce to children because of the funding (Michigan Department of Education, 2022, p. 5). The top five outcomes of the program in [2021-2022](#) reported by grantees were (1) increased variety of produce served, (2) greater consistency in ability to plan local produce purchasing, (3) increased food budget, (4) increased purchasing power, and (5) increased ability to meet school meal requirements (Michigan Department of Education, 2022, p. 6).

[Incentives](#) that match SNAP benefits at farmers’ markets have been shown to increase local food purchases among low-income families, while simultaneously boosting farmer profits (Fair Food Network, 2023). In Missouri, the [Double-Up Food Bucks](#) program has proven to be successful and includes many program partners. The federal grant that supports the program has to be renewed periodically and requires non-federal matching funds. Another strategy to increase access to local and regional food for those who are food insecure is to explore opportunities to connect Missouri farmers of all types with food banks to sell or donate food.

5. School Meals

- a) Investigate options that will provide support to districts that are eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, to provide free meals to all students, but choose not to do so due to limited financial resources.
- b) Explore opportunities to enable students who qualify for reduced price meals (130-185% of the Federal Poverty Level) to receive free meals.
- c) Explore options for statewide school meals debt reduction including consideration of a statewide Healthy Meals for All Program.

Background

The [percentage](#) of all children under 18 years of age who are food insecure is 12.8% in Missouri. This rate ranges between 29.9% in Pemiscot County, to 5.1% in St. Charles County (Map the Meal Gap, 2021). [The National School Lunch Program](#) (NSLP) continues to be crucial for combating child food insecurity (Ralston and Coleman-Jensen, 2017). Provisions such as the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#) lead to heightened participation as well as a key component to a [Healthy School Meals for All Program](#).

[Several states](#) have extended free lunches to students who previously qualified for reduced-price lunches. New Jersey passed a bill that made meals free to all students whose family incomes were less than 200% of the federal poverty level (Economou, 2022). Washington and New Mexico also made meals free for all who qualified for free or reduced-price lunches according to federal guidelines. Massachusetts, alternatively, has a policy to extend funding for free meals for all students in schools where greater than half of the students qualify for free and reduced meals; schools must opt-in to receive this funding.

6. Food Access

- a) Increase access to food in urban and rural food deserts by exploring innovative financing opportunities through public and private sources to fund for-profit grocery stores, non-profit organizations, co-ops, and alternative grocery models. Leverage funding with federal dollars such as those available through the USDA Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- b) Explore partnership and training opportunities to assist with the start-up and retention of small, locally owned grocery stores and alternative grocery models. Utilize training provided by the [Rural Grocery Initiative](#).
- c) Increase availability of and access to retailers or sponsors of all federal nutrition assistance programs, such as WIC-authorized retailers and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors, in rural and underserved areas.

- d) Explore options to allow older adults, adults with disabilities, and the unhoused to more effectively access and use SNAP benefits. These options include the Elderly Simplified Application Pilot (ESAP) and legislation that would allow target populations to use SNAP benefits for prepared foods.

Background

Research in [Missouri](#) found that around 9.6% of counties have one or fewer grocery stores, raising questions of the accessibility of fresh foods statewide (Dietterle, Ohler, & McKelvey, 2023). Counties with few grocery stores may force residents to rely on convenience stores or dollar stores for groceries, which tend to have fewer nutritious options and higher prices. Research findings exploring the impacts of [Healthy Food Financing Initiatives](#) show that private-public partnerships providing grants and loans for healthy food retail projects are one way to improve fresh food access in lower-income communities.

The [Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund](#) (CO4F) was established in 2013 with the goal of increasing access to healthy foods and finance grocery stores in areas that lacked access; a 2-year program evaluation found that 89% of all shoppers, 90% of low-income shoppers, and 92% of rural shoppers felt they could access healthy food more easily than before the investment in their community (Nourish Colorado, 2017).

The [Michigan Good Food Fund](#) (MGFF) was established in 2015 as a loan fund to invest in food enterprises; this program uniquely focused on supporting the entirety of the food value chain (growers, producers, processors, retailers, and food service businesses) with technical assistance (MGFF, 2020). An evaluation of MGFF found that 86% of shoppers at a loan-funded supermarket reported better access to healthy food since the store arrived; 75% of participating business owners also reported that they would not have been able to offer as many healthy foods without the support of the program.

The [New Jersey Food Access Initiative](#) was established to improve community health, increase food access, and boost economic development; an evaluation in 2014 found that nearly all the shoppers interviewed agreed that the store encouraged them to buy healthier foods and that its presence improved the community (The Food Trust, 2022).

7. Participation in Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs

- a) Review federal nutrition assistance program marketing and communications to ensure that materials are written using plain language are accessible for audiences who may not be tech-savvy, and are available in multiple languages.
- b) Consider ways to reduce the gap between those who are eligible and those who participate in all federal nutrition assistance programs including SNAP, WIC, and others.
- c) Continue and enhance outreach efforts and partnerships including SNAP Outreach and others. Target outreach to various audiences through senior centers, daycare centers, and other sites.

- d) Consider the findings from the Missouri Benefits Enrollment Transformation Report ([Civilla Report](#)), [WIC Innovation Project](#), and related research to address gaps in federal assistance program participation.

Background

Recent [research](#) in Missouri found that certain demographic groups are less likely to enroll in SNAP than others. Of eligible adults in Missouri over the age of 60, only 42% participate in SNAP compared to 85% of the overall population in Missouri (Missouri Foundation for Health, 2023). The same report found that veterans, students enrolled in higher education institutions, immigrant communities, adults over 60, and minority communities should be areas of focus for increasing awareness and assisting with enrollment. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program in Missouri has also seen a significant [participation rate decline](#) since 2020 (Food Research & Action Center, 2022). These populations may require targeted outreach to ensure that all who are eligible for programs have access to applications and understand the administrative processes.

[Research](#) recently conducted to understand the characteristics of SNAP-eligible, non-participating adults found that outreach efforts should target those who are 60 and older and those with the lowest incomes; the researchers advocate for states to fund community organizations to seek out these hard-to-reach populations (Dean, 2022). The National Council on Aging published a [report](#) on effective strategies for reaching seniors and increasing enrollment among those who are eligible for SNAP; they found each of the following strategies promising: the use of Facebook ads, the integration of SNAP outreach efforts with other program outreach, the training of non-profit staff in regular contact with seniors to screen for eligibility, and sending postcards to notify seniors that they can receive benefits from SNAP and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (NCOA, 2016).

[Pilot studies](#) conducted in Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, and Virginia found that targeted texting outreach with WIC-eligible mothers had a significant success rate for a low-cost method of increasing participation (Maneely & Neuberger, 2021). In October 2022, the USDA funded a grant to the Food Research & Action Center to create the [Community Innovation and Outreach Project](#) (CIAO). Since then, state and local agencies have been awarded subgrants to improve WIC outreach efforts, including the Andrew County, MO, Health Department (WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project, 2023). This funding enables technical assistance and implementation and evaluation application to find better WIC outreach strategies. Additional [research](#) conducted by Operation Food Search in St. Louis via the WIC Innovation Project points to ways to improve program enrollment and remove barriers to participation (Operation Food Search, 2022).

8. Farm Bill

- a) Encourage the United States Congress to pass a comprehensive Farm Bill, meeting the needs of U.S. producers of food and the nation's most vulnerable citizens who rely on the safety net provided in the Nutrition Title.

Background

“The [Farm Bill](#) is a comprehensive piece of legislation that affects farmers, the broader agriculture industry and consumers. Key programs of the Farm Bill deal with conservation, support payments for farmers and crop insurance. The largest share of spending — approximately 75% in the most recent Farm Bill — goes to programs that ensure healthy food access for low-income families across the country. Overall, the Farm Bill is an important pillar of our food and farming system in the United States and directly impacts local communities as well as Missouri’s number one industry: agriculture (Feeding Missouri, 2023).”

Conclusion

The recommendations developed by the Missouri Food Security Task Force undertake an approach to find solutions to food insecurity among Missourians. It recognizes that addressing food insecurity will take time and require a deliberate, systematic, and collaborative approach. Ultimately, progress toward solving food security challenges in Missouri will be a shared responsibility requiring a commitment from public and private stakeholders. Due to the diversity among task force members, a collaborative and consensus-based process was used to finalize recommendations. Therefore, information expressed here does not necessarily reflect the entire view or position from any specific person or organization, but rather differing views were embraced and incorporated into the final document where possible. This report, which outlines recommendations for next steps, concludes the work of the Missouri Food Security Task Force.

Citations

- Bass, M., Carlos Chavez, F. L., Chapman, D., Freeman, K., Mangoni, G. N., McKelvey, B., Miller, E., & Rikoon, S. (2019). *Missouri Hunger Atlas 2019*. University of Missouri, Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security. <https://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/missouri-hunger-atlas/>
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